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ABSTRACT

This paper is a how-to manual for doing poetic mini-dramas (PMD) with elementary school students. It describes the possibilities for discovery learning through the dramatization of poetry, lists initial suggestions for the teacher and the actual steps in the process, and reports the attitudes and vocabulary growth of second and third graders after being involved in PMD. The paper includes some suggestions for the teacher such as: beginning with short poems that involve a lot of action and an unlimited number of people; keeping the production simple in terms of props and blocking so that the children can concentrate on acting; and videotaping performances so that the children can see the importance of an actor's gestures, facial expressions, and movements. The paper demonstrates that children, without training, recognize when a dramatization is good because they are caught up in the performance. The paper describes children's ratings showing that they are able to recognize superior performances, and that they can even pinpoint specific weaknesses and strengths. Reasons for ratings that are listed in the paper include: characterization, relationship to other characters, relationship to the audience, camera framing, sound, props, and content. Six tables of data are included; an appendix with a PMD record form and six poems for dramatization are attached. (PRA)

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Poetic Mini-Dramas: Using Drama To Facilitate Creative Thinking and Understanding of Poetry

by Lillian H. Heil

April 1991

Introduction

Dramatizing poetry is an active aural approach to the poetic text. It is a method that encourages self discovery but it requires sustained practice for children to become skillful at finding meanings through dramatization. Many teachers don't use discovery methods because the process takes longer and is different from direct teaching, in some ways harder to use because the outcome is unpredictable, and they seldom see it modeled. The objectives of this program are to show the steps used for doing poetic mini-dramas (PMD), describe the possibilities for discovery learning and report the student attitudes and vocabulary growth after being involved in PMD.

How To Do PMD

Dramatization is a process of self-discovery for each actor. Children have to think for themselves in order to be convincing actors. That's a problem because "most of our students and most of us (teachers) have much more practice with recitation." (Joyce Educational Leadership 1985, 42(8), 4-7) In order to teach and use discovery learning skillfully, both teachers and students need practice. Teachers and children may enjoy dramatizing poems occasionally, but they won't develop much skill unless they do it once a week or about every two weeks for 30-45 minutes.

Doing PMD does not require memorization of parts because groups trade off between choral reading of the poem and pantomiming the actions of the characters. Video taping technician responsibilities can be taught to even young children so that the teacher does not have to be dashing around trying to run the machinery, instructing the actors and directing the choral reading group. As children gain expertise at dramatizing, they take over more of the work behind the dramatizations such as planning appropriate props, and blocking of actions. The emphasis is on the process of discovery not a finished product so props and costumes are always minimal and seldom does a class want to spend time video taping a dramatization more than once.

Choice of poems to dramatize is important. Start with short poems that involve a lot of action and an unlimited number of people. Acting in groups helps children to develop confidence. Pick poems such as "On Halloween" by Eileen Fisher.(1980. Out in the Dark and Daylight, Harper)

We mask our faces
and wear strange hats
and moan like witches
and screech like cats
and jump like goblins
and thump like elves
and almost manage
to scare ourselves.

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At the beginning don't try to do too much and keep the production simple in terms of props, and blocking. This allows children to focus on the acting.

Dramatic coaching is focused on acting as the character would. If he were angry, how do you show anger? If the child were a slithy tove or a frumious bandersnatch, how does he or she move? The playback capability of video tape makes instant feedback possible and children quickly learn to recognize the importance of actor's gestures, facial expressions and movement. They see the effect of skillful camera framing, use of closeups. long and middle shots, plus the sea-sickening effect of a jerky camera. The use of a choral reading group, actors and a group of video technicians help to develop a cohesive team out of the whole class. We tell them and they soon see that the combined efforts of readers, actors and technicians are important to the production of a quality video. That feeling of unity makes it easier for students to give and take criticism.

At the beginning, do not expect children to volunteer a lot of specific critiques about the production. The teacher can encourage thoughtful comments by asking why they thought something was good or bad. When a child says, "The camera should have been closer at the beginning," the teacher can then ask, "Why should the camera have been closer?" This kind of discussion can help the class to understand when closeups might improve the production. The teacher can also build on the comments made by children e.g. One child said, "The Gingerbread Man wasn't stiff enough." This child was then asked to demonstrate how a stiff gingerbread man would run. He was happy to do that and a few other children spontaneously joined him to demonstrate proper stiff walking.

Practical record keeping is part of the process for PMD. The majority of the children prefer the job of actor or technician over being a choral reader even though they know we could not do the dramatization without the poem being read aloud. The fair solution is record keeping so that children can take turns at being technicians, actors and readers. In many poems one character is more important so the record keeping should include what child takes what part. This helps give more children a chance to be a main character. A form that we have used is included in the appendix.

Steps in the Process

1. The poem (printed on chart paper) is posted at the front of the class.

2. Technicians from the week before select new "trainees" and show them how to get the equipment ready. (Put the video tape in, put the tripod up, hook the camera to it, connect the camera to the VCR)

3. Use some sort of anticipatory set to arouse the class interest in the "subject" of the poem.

4. Explain unusual words before or while the poem is read for the first time. Children are immediately involved in personally exploring the meanings of these words, e.g. with a word like "twiddle" they can be shown how so that they could twiddle their thumbs (much easier than explaining twiddle); with a word like "cavernous" they could be told that it means large like a cave and asked to make their mouth look "cavernous."

5. Read the poem aloud to them (usually the whole class is invited to join in part or all of the first reading).

6. Read the poem aloud several more times with pauses to dramatize as a whole group how one would "slurp spaghetti" or "look queasy" or "be a monster so fierce and wild" or "scream, yell, and bite."

7. Ask children to name the characters, props, costumes, and actions. (At the beginning the adults did the blocking)

8. If the poem can be acted with large groups (half or thirds of the class) divide the class into groups so that each gets a turn to act and to read.

9. Read the poem aloud while the group or individuals doing the actions practice their timing to the choral reading. Do this more than once if the class decides they need it. (Often the readers have to slow down to allow actors time to get the actions in)

10. Film the dramatization.

11. View the film immediately and ask children to give positive and negative critiques (about 3-5 minutes). Make the decision as to whether the class wants to work on the same poem the next week.

12. Have the technicians unhook the video equipment and roll the cart out of the room.

These steps were followed the first year. In the second year both second and third grades planned and carried out a production with background music. It wasn't very successful because record players didn't reproduce very good sound when picked up by the video recording and it was hard to adjust volume correctly. Our equipment was not sophisticated enough and neither were we.

In the second year we had both second and third grades block out the action for one poetic mini-drama. It takes two or three weeks to complete such a production-one for blocking, one to produce the drama and possibly a third one to evaluate the production. This was an extremely valuable discovery-higher-level-thinking-experience (as will be described later in the paper) for children but if it is done in the first year, it would best be done at the second half of the year so children have some idea of what they are trying to do and how to do it. Initially we thought children would not want to do planning sessions (that included blocking) every time, but with third graders we've decided that they may be able to have these longer planning sessions more frequently—perhaps as often as once a month. Recording the planning, the production and the evaluation sessions also provide valuable data showing children's increased skill at doing PMD.

Possibilities for Discovery Learning

Children can, without training, recognize when a dramatization is a good because they are caught up in the performance. Some describe such a drama as "coming to life"; it makes sense because the characters are convincing, and they relate to each other. It is like an actual situation happening before your eyes. Because it is convincing, the power of it grabs the attention and interest of children. Such magical performances are responded to but seldom analyzed. Poetic mini-dramas help children discover why one performance is better than another and they learn what to do to create a successful dramatization.

The children's ratings given for the poetic mini-dramas at the end of the year showed that they recognized the superior performances. Children who were interviewed as to reasons for ratings and class discussions showed that they could pinpoint specific weaknesses and strengths. Their increased skill at characterization, blocking and use of the camera showed that they were improving with practice.

Ratings of Poetic Mini-Dramas

In Mrs. W's second grade, "My Favorite Word" had the highest average rating for both boys and girls. This is a poem about "yes" as a favorite word. It was the last poem dramatized and a planning session with the children choosing the characters, the props and planning the blocking was videoed. They decided to have a whole group of children discussing their favorite word in a group by a round table, asking a mother for the cake from a nearby shelf, and asking a father at the table reading a book to take them to the movie, and finally going out the door as if they were on their way.

The children's discussion group actually looked as if they were talking. The children went to ask for cake, cookies and candy on time and the father nodded his head and got up to take them to the movie in the right place. One child was a little exaggerated in his gestures, but he is a child who is a real wiggler. An evaluation session with the class was also videoed and their comments will be discussed in the section on class evaluation.

The dramatization with the lowest rating was "New Kid On the Block". There were two main reasons. Part of the video was erased and in the part that was saved the tough new kid was smiling instead of looking mean and tough. (The whole year of PMD's was replayed when the children were asked to rate each drama in May).

Mrs. J's second grade class rated "Gobbledy Gobble" as the top drama. It's about a skinny turkey scorned by all the fat turkeys. The skinny turkey gets the last laugh because all the others get eaten for Thanksgiving dinner. The performance was not well done all the way through. The actors were not in character all the time and the turkeys did not clearly show the relationship between the fat turkeys and the skinny one. What captured the imagination of the viewers was the last part where the skinny turkey pointed at the fat turkeys being served for dinner and then literally fell down laughing at them. It made the drama.

The lowest rating was for "Someone," a poem about a child who heard knocking at the door. When she opened the door, she heard various animal noises but saw no one. The girl who played the child did a very mechanical job of looking from side to side to see who had knocked. She did not react to any of the animal noises so it was a pretty boring dramatization.

In Miss A's third grade the top rated drama was "The Closet" by Cassedy. A boy's imagining about what monsters might be in his closet is brought to life by a variety of monsters who come out of the door as they are named and then all come pouring out the door at the end of the poem as if they are really after the boy. The acting of the boy in this drama was quite convincing. The monsters were not consistent; some were very good and some were not. The ending was exciting where some of the monsters making weird faces came up very close to the camera. The children enjoyed this and it did fit the story implied in the poem. The boys (1.43 average rating with 1 being excellent to 5 being terrible) liked this much better than the girls (2.08 rating) with an average of 1.68.

The lowest rating was given to a dramatization of Prelutsky's "Spaghetti" in which about eight children acted out the eating of mounds of hot, delicious spaghetti. All but one of the characterizations were well done with facial expressions and appropriate body movement and gestures. However, one boy in the front row was going beyond what was appropriate in his acting. He rolled his eyes and exaggerated too far to fit the poem. He looked silly and his acting was a distraction. Besides this, the poem wasn't as interesting to dramatize because it didn't require as much vigorous action as the more popular poems did.

Mrs. Ha's third grade class rated one of the performances of Carroll's "Jabberwock" as the top drama in their room. The characterization of the slithy toves, the borogoves and the momeraths at the beginning was especially convincing as a pair of each of these fantasy creatures slithered and clawed their way across the acting space. The whiffling and burbling sound effects were effective and knocking the head off the jabberwock looked convincing. (The jabberwock held a paper sack-filled-head in front of his cape-covered body).

The bottom rating was given to the 4th dramatization of "Angry Valentine" about a child who will yell, scream, bite, whine, mope, pine, frown and so forth if the valentine of his choice won't return his affection. Of the four dramatizations of this poem (giving different actors a turn) number four was the least active, but 2, 3, and 4 were all similar in that the children looked frozen in place. They had expressions on their faces but looked as if they didn't know how to move their arms and bodies. The first performance of "Angry Valentine" was by far the best acting because the children did more acting with their whole bodies and the children's rating of it was 5th out of 13 in comparison to the other 3 versions which were rated at the very bottom of the line-up.

In Miss Hi's third grade the top rating was for "Smasheroo", a mythical creature created by Jack Prelutsky who goes around smashing everything until he gets smashed by an irate Mama Greep. The boy who played the Smasheroo loved to act and did a very convincing job of being a creature who smashed dishes, chairs and tables. He knocked over everything we had in sight with his arms and legs flying. It was an ideal part for a very large and active third grader. When the Mama Greep showed up to defend her child she didn't hesitate to grab the Smasheroo around the waist and throw him to the floor. Both boys and girls appreciated the acting in this PMD.

The bottom rating was given to the first performance of "The Gingerbread Man' in which several things happened that were distracting. The characters weren't ready at the start (they said they didn't know we had started to tape it), the gingerbread man was at one time behind those who were supposed to be chasing him, the gingerbread man got behind the fox (to look like he was eaten) too fast and his head showed (behind the fox) when he was supposed to have been eaten. The sound of the choral reading was muffled and hard to understand. (I believe we had tried out the idea of prerecording the reading of the poem) The children seemed to feel that most of the errors were corrected in the second filming and rated it as fourth from the top.

The top and bottom ratings given to the PMD's in each class show evidence of children's ability to recognize good and bad performances. The next section (discussing the reasons children gave for ratings) shows that they could analyze the reasons why performances were good or bad.

Reasons for Ratings - Individual Interviews

Children whose ratings were very different from the rest of the class were interviewed (when the teacher felt it would not interfere with regular instruction and in a couple of the classrooms a very small number were available to interview) as to reasons for their ratings. In one third grade the teacher let these children have time to respond to all the mini-dramas if they could remember why they gave the rating. (The rating session in which the year's worth of PMD's for each class were replayed so that children could see them and rate them had been done a week or more before the individual children were interviewed). The reasons fell into the following categories:

Characterization - Movements and gestures that fit or did not fit the character
Relationship to other Characters being behind the other person if you're supposed to chase him, touching or grabbing him without embarrassment if that is required
Relationship to the Audience - The actor acts towards the audience (in this case the camera) so the action can be seen
Camera Framing - Camera is focused on the right action, not catching someone who is waiting to come onto the scene. It also includes keeping the camera movements slow because jerky camera movement distracts from the drama being filmed.
Sound - A few dramas had background music; otherwise sound refers to the clarity of the choral reading of the poem
Props - Use of props such as objects and lighting
Content - Likes or dislike of the topic of action in the PMD

Table 1 shows that most of the reasons for ratings fell into the characterization category.

Table 1. Reasons for PMD Ratings

	Characteriz.		Relationship to Other Characters		Relationship to Audience		Camera Framing		Sound		Props		Casting		Content		Total		Cum Total
	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	
Class	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	S G	
2nd Grade J	4 1	0 0	2 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	7 + 1 +	0 + 0 =	8
2nd Grade W	5 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	3 0	0 0	2 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	11 + 0 +	0 + 0 =	11
2nd Grade Total	9 1	0 0	2 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	3 0	0 0	2 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	2 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	18 + 1 +	0 + 0 =	19
3rd Grade A	8 3	6 4	3 0	0 0	1 0	0 0	9 0	1 0	0 0	0 0	1 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	29 + 3 +	0 + 4 =	36
3rd Grade Ha	2 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	1 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	3 + 0 +	0 + 0 =	3
3rd Grade Hi	34 3	7 4	2 0	0 0	6 0	0 0	6 0	0 0	0 11	0 1	2 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	4 0	0 0	54 + 14 +	7 + 5 =	80
3rd Grade Total	44 6	13 8	5 0	0 0	7 0	0 0	15 0	1 0	0 11	0 1	4 0	0 0	0 0	0 0	4 0	0 0	86 + 17 +	7 + 9 =	119
2nd & 3rd Total	53 7	13 8	7 0	0 0	7 0	0 0	18 0	1 0	2 11	0 1	4 0	0 0	2 0	0 0	4 0	0 0	104 + 18 +	7 + 9 =	138

The range in the five classrooms was from 39% (of the total reasons) to 66%. The average in the two second grades was 47%, in the third 48% and the average percentage in this category for all five classrooms was 48%. All but 15 of the 81 comments about characterization were specific such as the Following:

The tough girl in "New Kid on the Block" kept smiling instead of looking mean.
Five children in one class noticed that the gingerbread man's head showed after he was supposed to have been eaten.
The gingerbread man wasn't straight and stiff as he should be.
Ranae was a good monster with her wild hair (I think she was supposed to be frazzled)
Two ghosts went under one desk (when each ghost was supposed to be climbing into his own separate washing machine).

The next largest category related to camera framing with a total of 18 comments such as:

I could see the actors waiting to come one.
Nate left and the camera was still on him. The camera was supposed to be on the storyteller.
The camera kept moving to unimportant characters in the back.

Children were willing to critique themselves. One girl rated "Eat It All Elaine" with the lowest rating because the poem was read so fast she didn't have time to chew everything in time to go along with the action. We made the mistake of actually having edible things like raisins for bugs and brown sugar for sand. The one that really did her in was the prune for a prune pit. One boy said, "I was the camera man and I didn't do a good job. I didn't get the people in the back."

A few did not like "Eat It All Elaine" because of the gross stuff she had to eat." Another unusual comment was the third grade girl who didn't share the class's enthusiasm for the "Smasheroo". She was afraid he would break the desks and wanted him to climb on them rather than knock and kick things over.

It was interesting, too, that none of these specific critiques were made while watching the video. The interviews took place a week or two after children had watched the year's poetic mini-dramas in order to rate their quality. They remembered the films remarkably well. The overall percentage of specific comments was 111 out of 139 or 80% and most of the general comments (11/26) were about the sound being good or bad.

Reasons for Evaluative Comments - Class Discussions

Both of the second grade class evaluation sessions of "My Favorite Word" were recorded on video. Table 2 shows how their comments were categorized. Notice that there is no column for general comments because all the responses were specific suggestions. Casting and content categories were taken off because there were no responses in these categories. Two categories were added - Suggestions for Action and a category for Blocking.

Table 2. Class Evaluations of PMD

	Characteriz.		Relationship to Other Characters		Relationship to Audience		Camera Framing (+ Odd Color)		Sound		Props		Suggestions for Action		Suggestions for Blocking		Total		Cum Total
Class and Poem	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	Neg	Pos	
2nd Gr. J "My Favorite Word"	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0 +	11 =	11
2nd Gr. W "My Favorite Word"	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	0	4	0	10 +	4 =	14
2nd Grade Total "My Favorite Word"	3	7	0	2	0	0	0	2	1	1	2	0	0	3	4	0	10 +	15 =	25
3rd Gr. A "Gingerbread Man"	2	6	0	1	1	0	1	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	4 +	13 =	17
3rd Gr. Ha "Gingerbread Man"	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	4 +	1 =	5
3rd Gr. Hi "Gingerbread Man"	0	7	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4 +	8 =	12
3rd Grade Total "Gingerbread Man"	4	14	1	2	1	0	4	4	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	12 +	22 =	34
2nd & 3rd Total	7	21	1	4	1	0	4	6	2	2	2	0	1	4	4	0	22 +	37 =	59

The largest category in the second grades was characterization with 10 out of 25 comments (40%) and the majority (7/10) were positive. They included comments such as:

They all nodded their heads when the poem said, "yes, yes, yes."
Father was reading a book and mouthing, "yes, yes, yes."
One class made suggestions for blocking such as:
It would have been better if we had lined up on one side to get the cake from mother because we couldn't see her.
Father could have come in the door like he was coming home from work and we could run up to ask if we could go to a movie.

The other second grade made several suggestions for better actions such as:

Father could have been so busy reading he would be surprised when the children rushed over to get cookies. He could stand looking like he wondered what was going on.
They could have turned out the lights when they left to go to the movie.

In the third grades the largest number of responses related to characterization (18-34) with 7 negative and 21 positive comments about the "Gingerbread Man."

The sower was sowing seeds
The cook was polishing the stove
The gingerbread man wasn't stiff enough when he moved
You could tell the difference between the fox's yawn and his snap (done with cardboard teeth taped to the arms of the blanket covered child playing the fox).
Melissa acted like she was tired by bending over.

The other big category was related to the camera technique with 8/34 comments. Some examples were as follows:

The camera should have been closer. We should have used the telescopic lens like we planned. (It was actually a zoom lens but it had a T on it so we called it "telescopic".
The close-up of the fox was very good.
One camera man reminded us that he had purposely focused on the runners feet to show that they were chasing the gingerbread man.

The number of positive comments for all 5 classes was greater (37/59) than the negative (22/59) which is closer to normal than the individual interviews were because many of the children were being asked why their ratings were low. Both the individual interviews and the class discussions showed that young children are both capable of and interested in evaluating dramatic performances in a specific and analytical way.

would have to move all the desks to the center or one side to keep them out of the camera view when filming.

Choosing of characters has always been done by the children because it can be done quickly and helps them understand the story faster. Blocking takes longer and a whole class would get tired of doing it every time because it took a whole session (30 minutes) to plan it and it had to be practiced and filmed the next time. However, done occasionally, it helped them to analyze what kind of planning is required in a drama and it may help them do a better job of critiquing. Recently we have about decided the third graders can do the longer planning sessions more often. There seemed to be a lot of active participation and interest in all of the evaluation sessions (with some references back to our planning sessions) held after the dramas which they had helped to block.

Incidental Learning

This project began as an effort to help children enjoy poetry. It was quickly apparent that they enjoyed acting out poetry and being able to see their efforts on T.V. but did their attitudes become more favorable and did they learn any new vocabulary through dramatizations? We tried to find this out by asking them to rate other poems and by giving them vocabulary tests on the unusual words found in the poems we dramatized.

Change of Attitudes Towards Poetry

Changes in attitude towards other poems are not conclusive. Twenty poems were read to them in the fall and in late spring. We purposely included a variety both serious and funny, unrhymed and rhymed. Table 3 shows the results in the second and third grades. The rating scale was 1 (or excellent) to 5 or (terrible).

In the second grade the average rating was slightly smaller in May indicating that they liked the poems a little better. In the third grade the ratings for some classes were lower in May but the over-all average was the same.

In the fall of 1990 20 new poems were read to third children who had done PMD's in the second grade and children in the same school and in third grades in another district who had not done any PMD's. Table 4 shows that the ratings for those who had dramatized poetry were lower than those who had not, indicating that perhaps the children who had been actively involved with poetry on a weekly basis liked poetry better than children who did not dramatize poetry on a regular basis, but the difference is not large.

Table 3. Average Ratings of 20 Poems in October and May

Grade	Girls October	Boys October	Average of Girls and Boys October	Girls May	Boys May	Average of Girls and Boys May
2nd Grade J	1.36	1.43	1.39	1.21	1.19	1.19
2nd Grade W	1.78	2.41	2.19	1.99	2.12	2.16
Total	1.57	1.92	1.79	1.60	1.65	1.68
3rd Grade A	2.12	1.98	2.04	2.01	1.95	1.97
3rd Grade Ha	2.03	1.98	2.01	2.02	2.10	2.06
3rd Grade Hi	1.65	2.23	1.98	1.70	2.23	2.00
Total	1.93	2.06	2.00	1.91	2.09	2.00

Table 4. Average Ratings of 20 Poems October 1990

	Girls	Boys	Total
Did PMD's	1.82	2.06	1.95
Did not do PMD's	2.18	2.35	2.26

What the ratings for the 20 poems do show is which poems are the favorites as shown by table 5. But evidence to support changes in attitude would probably be better shown by a record of poetry books voluntarily checked out by children, poetry suggestions brought to class by children for dramatizing (of which we had 6 or 7) and their ability to read poems with expression and meaning. (Good oral reading would seem to indicate that they are dramatizing the poems to themselves).

Table 5. Rank Order of Poetry Preferences October 1990

Did Poetic Mini-Dramas			Did Not Do Poetic Mini-Dramas		
Girls	Boys	Average	Girls	Boys	Average
1. A Day in Spring 1.20	1. A Day in Spring 1.29	1. A Day in Spring 1.25	1. A Day in Spring 1.29	1. A Day in Spring 1.37	1. A Day in Spring 1.33
2. Kitty Caught a Caterpillar 1.20	2. Germs 1.42	2. The Tickle Rhyme 1.39	2. The Tickle Rhyme 1.51	2. The Worm 1.51	2. The Worm 1.51
3. The Tickle Rhyme 1.35	3. The Tickle Rhyme 1.42	3. Germs 1.43	3. The worm 1.51	3. Kitty Caught a Caterpillar 1.69	3. The Tickle Rhyme 1.61
4. Galoshes 1.40	4. The Worm 1.50	4. Kitty Caught a Caterpillar 1.45	4. Germs 1.54	4. The Tickle Rhyme 1.71	4. Kitty Caught a Caterpillar 1.69
5. Germs 1.45	5. Kitty Caught a Caterpillar 1.67	5. The Worm 1.48	5. Kitty Caught a Caterpillar 1.69	5. Germs 1.86	5. Germs 1.70
6. The Worm 1.45	6. Bird Talk 1.71	6. Galoshes 1.61	6. Rover 1.83	6. Rover 1.89	6. Rover 1.86
7. Whispers 1.60	7. Galoshes 1.79	7. Bird Talk 1.70	7. Windy Nights 1.83	7. For a Quick Exit 2.20	7. Windy Nights 2.03
8. Who Has Seen the Wind 1.60	8. Lawn Mower 1.83	8. Whispers 1.75	8. Bird Talk 1.86	8. Windy Nights 2.23	8. Bird Talk 2.11
9. For a Quick Exit 1.70	9. Whispers 1.88	9. Rover 1.89	9. Galoshes 1.94	9. Lawn Mower 2.29	9. For a Quick Exit 2.16
10. Rover 1.70	10. The Snake 2.04	10. Lawn Mower 1.91	10. For a Quick Exit 2.11	10. The Snake 2.31	10. Galoshes 2.21
11. Birdtalk 1.70	11. Rover 2.04	11. Who has Seen the Wind? 1.91	11. Who Has Seen the Wind? 2.31	11. Bird Talk 2.37	11. Who Has Seen the Wind 2.37
12. Windy Nights 1.75	12. Who Has Seen the Wind 2.12	12. For a Quick Exit 1.98	12. The Tragedy 2.43	12. Who has Seen the Wind? 2.43	12. Law Mower 2.43
13. Lawn Mower 2.00	13. For a Quick Exit 2.21	13. Windy nights 2.00	13. Is Somewhere Always Far Away? 2.57	13. Galoshes 2.49	13. The Tragedy 2.54
14. The Tragedy 2.05	14. Windy Nights 2.21	14. The Snake 2.16	14. Law Mower 2.57	14. The Tragedy 2.66	14. The Snake 2.57

Did Poetic Mini-Dramas			Did Not Do Poetic Mini-Dramas		
Girls	Boys	Average	Girls	Boys	Average
15. City 2.20	15. The Tragedy 2.46	15. The Tragedy 2.27	15. Whispers 2.60	15. Dragonfly 2.74	15. Is Somewhere Always Far Away? 2.67
16. Lighting a Fire 2.20	16. City 2.58	16. Lighting a Fire 2.41	16. Lighting a Fire 2.66	16. City 2.77	16. Dragonfly 2.70
17. The Snake 2.30	17. Lighting a Fire 2.58	17. City 2.41	17. Dragonfly 2.66	17. Is Somewhere Always Far Away? 2.77	17. Whispers 2.73
18. Every Insect 2.35	18. Every insect 2.58	18. Every Insect 2.48	18. The Snake 2.83	18. Whispers 2.86	18. City 2.83
19. Dragonfly 2.50	19. Dragonfly 2.79	19. Dragonfly 2.66	19. Every Insect 2.89	19. Every Insect 2.89	19. Lighting a Fire 2.83
20. Is Somewhere Always Far Away? 2.75	20. Is Somewhere Always Far Away? 3.04	20. Is Somewhere Always Far Away? 2.91	20. City 2.89	20. Lighting a Fire 3.00	20. Every Insect 2.89

Vocabulary Development

In the fall of 1990 an informal test of unusual words found in the poems dramatized the year before was given to third graders who had been involved in the dramatizations and third graders in the same school and in another district who had not done the PMD's with the vocabulary words in them. Table 6 shows the results.

The children of both sexes who did the PMD had higher averages than those who did not but it was only 2 1/2 words more.

Table 6. Vocabulary Test Number of Words Correct Out of 25

	Girls	Boys	Average
Had PMD	22	22.56	22.48
Did Not Have PMD	20.72	20.88	20.80

Conclusion

While doing PMD's children engage in discovering meanings in poetry and are involved in higher order thinking as they analyze what makes a successful performance or what can go wrong and be a distraction to the audience. In the meaningful context of a video production they learn how to use video equipment, the responsibility involved in being part of a team that is producing a mini drama and how to take and give criticism for the mutual good of the production. Producing poetic mini-dramas is a highly motivating way to get at the meanings of poetry because it is so much fun for everyone involved - teachers and students. It probably helps their attitudes towards poetry and it may help them learn some of the unusual words typical of well-written poetry.

APPENDIX

PMD Record Form

Poems for Dramatization

"My Favorite Word" by Lucia and James L. Hymes, Jr.

"Gobbledy Gobble" by Felice Holman

"The Smasheroo" by Jack Prelutsky

"Jabberwock" by Lewis Carroll

"Closet" by Sylvia Cassedy

"The Creature in the Classroom" by Jack Prelutsky

Record of PMD

Teacher_____Date_____Grade Level_____

Title of Poem_____Author_____

Title of Book (poem is in)_____

Video Tech._____ Tripod and Camera Tech._____ Camera Op._____
Helper _____ Helper _____ Helper_____

_____

Characters Props Minimal Costumes

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Blocking Plan

My Favorite Word

There is one word-

My favorite-

The very, very best.

Isn't No or Maybe.

It's Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes, YES!

"Yes, yes, you may," and

"Yes, of course," and

"Yes, Please help yourself."

And when I want a piece of cake,

"Why, yes. It's on the shelf."

Some candy? "yes."

A cookie? "Yes."

A movie? "Yes, we'll go."

I love it when they say my word:

Yes, Yes, YES! (Not No.)

by Lucia and James L. Hymes, Jr.

De Regniers, Beatrice. (Selected by). (1988). Sing a Song of Popcorn. (p.99). New York: Scholastic.

Gobbledy-Gobble

How they laughed!

"He's so scrawny.
Scrawny! Scrawny!" they taunt me.
"Not handsome and brawny.
He's ugly as sin."
So gobbledy-gob-
ble, I'm not with the mob
because of the shape that I'm in.
"The worst on the block.
A disgrace to the flock."
They're ashamed to admit
they're my kin.

Well, sometimes they hurt
('Twould be nice to be purt-
y.), but common sense says
"You're a winner."
For on Thanksgiving Day
they have all gone away
to be somebody's good-looking dinner.

by Felice Holman

Livingston, Myra Cohn. (Selected by). (1985). Thanksgiving Poems. (p.19).
New York: Holiday House.

The Smasheroo

The Smasheroo, the Smasheroo!
It loved to smash things up,
it smashed a million mirrors
and at least as many cups,
it broke a batch of bottles
into bits as big as beans,
and shattered stacks of saucers
into scads of smithereens.

It devastated dishes,
it disintegrated clocks,
it demolished chairs and tables
and it decimated rocks,
but alas it grew too reckless
in its smashing sort of way,
and that is why the Smasheroo
is not around today.

One afternoon it stumbled
on a tiny baby Greep,
and pulverized its rattle
as the infant lay asleep,
but Mama Greep was watching,
in a fury up she flew,
and in half a dozen seconds
Mama smashed the Smasheroo.

by Jack Prelutsky

Prelutsky, Jack. (1982). The Baby Uggs Are Hatching. (p. 14). New York: Mulberry Books of William Morrow.

Jabberwocky

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought-
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Calloh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves
And the mome raths outgrabe.

by Lewis Carroll

Carroll, Lewis. (1964). Jabberwocky. New York: Dell Publishing Co.

Closet

Just what is it
in the closet
that I positively
hear?

Does it
guzzle? is it
grizzled? does it
dazzle? is it
frazzled? has it
nozzles? was it
muzzled? does it
nuzzle in your ear?

If I razz it
or displease it
if I tease it
or surprise it,
if I faze it
or amaze it,
will I cause it
to appear?

If the whoozit
in the closet
should inquisitively
visit-
just suppose it
pays a visit-
should I praise it
or confuse it?
should I daze it
or amuse it?
will I lose it
if I seize it?
will I bruise it
if I squeeze it?
will I freeze it
if I hose it?
will I please it
or abuse it
if I use it
as a spear?

Just what is it
that is nearly,
just what is it
that is clearly,
just what is it
in the closet
that is positively
here?

by Sylvia Cassedy

Cassedy, Sylvia. (1987). Roomrimes. (p.8). New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.

The Creature in the Classroom

It appeared inside our classroom
at a quarter after ten,
it gobbled up the blackboard,
three erasers and a pen.
It gobbled teacher's apple
and it bopped her with the core.
"How dare you!" she responded.
"You must leave us...there's the door."

The creature didn't listen
but described an arabesque
as it gobbled all her pencils
seven notebooks and her desk.
Teacher stated very calmly,
"Sir! you simply cannot stay.
I'll report your to the principal
unless you go away!"

But the thing continued eating,
it ate paper, swallowed ink.
As it gobbled up our homework,
I believe I saw it wink.
Teacher finally lost her temper.
"OUT!" she shouted at the creature.
The creature hopped beside her
and GLOPP...it gobbled teacher.

by Jack Prelutsky

Prelutsky, Jack. (1982). The Baby Uggs Are Hatching. (p.28). New York: Mulberry Books of William Morrow and Co.